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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
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SUBJECT: Russia, Syria/Argentina, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian
Territories (1/26-28)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Jan. 28 reported that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Tehran and Damascus must be involved in the Middle East peace process. "We are deeply convinced that Iran and Syria must not be isolated, but, rather, brought into the peace process," Lavrov told Russian journalists in Moscow on Jan. 27. Lavrov believes Iran and Syria must understand that they are expected to have a positive influence on the situation, which will allow them to take their deserved equal place in the regional dialogue.

On Syrian/Argentinean relations papers reported that the President of Argentina, Nestor Kirchner, on Jan. 25 received a verbal message from President Asad about bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was conveyed by Information Minister Mohsen Bilal. During the meeting Kirchner expressed Argentina's respect for the president and people of Syria, indicating that he would visit Syria in the very near future. Kirchner emphasized Syria's important role in the region, indicating that the Middle East is the key to peace in the world.

Bilal reviewed Syria's vision of current events and developments in the region, particularly in Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon, stressing Syria's efforts to ensure stability and security in the Middle East.

He expressed Syria's readiness to host a conference on Iraqi reconciliation with the participation of all of Iraqi society. Papers also featured Minister Bilal's interview with Brazilian newspaper "Folia," in which he stressed Syria's call for "a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on international legitimacy and the land for peace formula." Bilal also said, "we condemn all forms of terrorism" stressing the need to differentiate between terrorism and the people's right to resist occupation.

As for unrest in Lebanon, papers reported

President Lahoud's statement confirming that the measures which have been taken by the Lebanese army in Beirut and the suburbs and the rest of the Lebanese areas "have blocked attempts to drown Lebanon in a state of instability and chaos in order to have negative repercussions on Lebanon's regional and international presence." Lahoud called on Lebanese spiritual leaders to translate their calls for calm into deeds. Papers also reported that Hizbollah SecGen Nasrallah on Jan. 25 called on the Lebanese and national political leaderships to "leave the streets, exercise self-control, show calm

and return home. I ask the people to comply with all the measures taken by the Lebanese army." Nasrallah called on all Lebanese "not to instigate or strain the atmosphere, in order to preserve the safety and security of civil peace and coexistence." News reports said that two Lebanese students were shot dead and scores were wounded when a number of pro-government gunmen attacked the campus of Beirut's Arab University. Government-owned Tishreen on Jan. 27 quoted press sources saying that a Syrian worker was "brutally" killed and his body mutilated in the Lebanese town of Amshit, Jubayl district, which is under the control of supporters of the Samir Ja'ja'-led Lebanese Forces party.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reiterates the importance of engaging Syria and Iran in any dialogue on the region" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/28)

"A message from President Asad to Argentinean President Kirchner conveyed by Minister of Information Bilal. Kirchner: "I will visit Damascus soon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/27)

"Minister of Information Bilal to Brazilian newspaper 'Folia': Syria denounces all forms of terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

"Militias of the Lebanese authority try to drag Lebanon into sedition as their bullets kill two and wound tens of Lebanese. Lahoud: Chaos will not solve any dispute. Lebanese speaker calls for concordance and dialogue. Former Lebanese PM al-Hoss urges resort to reason, to avert catastrophe. Former Lebanese PM Karami: Lebanon is at a crossroads. Nasrallah: He who aims a weapon at a

brother is an Israeli. Lebanese army imposes curfew in Beirut" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

"Nine Lebanese injured by poisonous Israeli balloons over Tyre and al-Nabatyieh in southern Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/28)

"The Lebanese opposition praises the army's role in containing chaos: The governing team is responsible for bloodshed" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/28)

"Normal life returns to the Lebanese capital. Beirut bids farewell to its martyrs. Lebanese opposition holds the authority's militias responsible for chaos and stirring up sedition" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/27)

"Pro-Lebanese forces kill a Syrian worker and mutilate his body" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/27)

"More than 17 Palestinians killed within two days. Hamas calls on Head of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas to end sedition" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/28)

"Gaza: More clashes reported between Fatah and Hamas postpone dialogue" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/27)

"Seven US soldiers killed in Iraq. Washington is angry: Stop war on Iraq and bring our soldiers back" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/28)

"President Asad discusses the situation in Iraq and its impact on neighboring countries with an Iranian party delegation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

"Speaker of the US House of Representatives visits Iraq. Killing of a US marine in al-Anbar and 22 Iraqis in Mosul" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/27)

"Bush orders his troops to kill Iranians in Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/27)

"A war in Haifa Street in Baghdad. Iraqi VP Abdul Mehdi: Occupying Iraq was a foolish decision" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

"Imminent detente in the Palestinian government crisis"
(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

"British MPs call on Blair government to hold dialogue with Middle East countries" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/26)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"A Long US Horror Film"

Isam Dari, Chief Editor of government-owned Tishrin, wrote (1/27):
"Neoconservatives in the US Administration base their policies and actions on mythical Talmudic ideas that run against reason, logic, and sound analysis...."

"These neoconservatives belong to Christian Zionism, which believes that the world will end with the Armageddon and that this battle will be preceded by chaos, disasters, and much suffering."

"The theorists of neoconservatives do not hide their hostile intentions and insistence on inventing strange theories, such as 'creative instability,' especially in our Arab region. They push the American army to spread sedition, disaster, destruction, and suffering based on those satanic Talmudic ideas, which are embraced not only by clergymen, but also by political decision-makers, economic and financial leaders, and research centers managed by thinkers and experts in all fields...."

"This explains what is happening in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon. Chaos is spreading rapidly and the US Administration is promoting horror, death, destruction, and disaster in the neighborhood of the Armageddon battle, which, according to their sick mind, will take place on the Hill of Megiddo -- 20 miles east of Haifa -- and be the end of the world."

"The team that rules the United States today is, therefore, fully responsible for what has happened and is happening in the region. It is responsible for the tragedy of Iraqis, the torment of Palestinians, and the chaos that it is feeding strongly in Lebanon...."

"These leaders might be leading their own people, before anyone else, to a disaster and marking the end of the American empire. For today's world, which is based on reason and sound judgment, can no longer accept myths. And nations, no matter how helpless, are able to foil attempts to invent a new world history derived from these myths and sick dreams."

"Gradual Sedition"

Hanan Hamad, a columnist in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (1/27):
"The spread of domestic sedition in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories is a product of Bush's plans and strategies for the region...."

"They are certainly the practical translation of creative instability and hard labor that the emissaries of the US Administration, doves and hawks, have preached while touring the region, from Colin Powell, who talked elaborately about a new map of the region, to Condaleeza Rice, who was not touched by the destruction of Lebanon and the massacres against the Lebanese when she saw them firsthand in her visit during the aggression, but considered them to be the birth pangs, though bloody, of a new Middle East."

"Double Impasse"

Muhammad Khayr al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (1/26): "In his State of the Union address, President Bush appeared as if begging Americans to support his Iraq plan, frightening them with threats that exist only in his imagination....

"But Because President Bush's experience in office in the past six years has been enough to characterize his policy as a failed policy and to label him as the worst president in the history of the United States -- given the political, material, and moral damage he has brought upon his country and its foreign relations -- his plan did not enjoy the support of the American people and Congress....

"Bush is facing a double impasse, one at home and one abroad.... Now that Bush has defied the will of the majority of Americans through his refusal to withdraw from Iraq and to change his strategy toward the region, the important question is: How can one who does not respect his people's unanimity on a certain policy or issue claim to be willing to bring democracy and freedom to others?

Corbin